

RIVER GEOMORPHOLOGY edited by E. J. Hickin, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, 1995. No. of pages: xii + 255. Price: £45.00 (hb). ISBN 0-471-95531-0.

This book contains 12 papers on fluvial geomorphology from the International Association of Geomorphologists' conference in Canada in August 1993. Apart from Slattery and Burt's study of the grain size of eroded soil, which seems out of place in a book with this title, the papers are all concerned with river channels at reach rather than network scale. They are claimed in the Preface to 'reflect the rich diversity of perspectives and interests of river scientists internationally', but the authors are predominantly geographers and their affiliations are exclusively European (ten papers) or Canadian (two papers). The selection is also biased towards a particular style of geomorphology: field measurement and/or data analysis. Deductive modelling figures in only three papers (Nicholas and Walling's simple 2-D model for floodplain flow and sedimentation, a braiding process study by Lane *et al.*, and a preliminary report by Mosselman *et al.* of attempts to predict channel migration and avulsion in the Brahmaputra). There are no laboratory studies and only one reasonably well-controlled field experiment, Schmidt and Gintz's investigation of shape as well as size sorting in steep-stream bedload movement.

Two papers (Lane *et al.*, and de Jong and Ergenzinger on steep streams in Southern Germany) give background to, and partial summary of, more detailed papers published elsewhere so may be of use to students. The others are new, at

least to me, but several of them apply standard approaches in new locations rather than offering any kind of synthesis, theoretical development or conceptual novelty. Batalla and Sala quantify the magnitude and frequency of bedload transport at a site in NE Spain, Conesa Garcia that of channel adjustment in SE Spain, Castaldini and Piacente the human restriction of meander migration in N Italy, and Lajczak the human influence on floodplain alluviation in Poland. Kostaschuk and Ilersich compare dune migration in the Fraser River estuary (Canada) with earlier direct measurements of bedload, and Hickin draws general conclusions from a discontinuity in hydraulic geometry at a single site.

The standard of production is higher than in many conference volumes and I suspect the editor and his team of reviewers have done a good behind-the-scenes job in ensuring consistency and clarity. Nevertheless, I have severe doubt about the value of conference books like this which lack a well-defined theme. The best papers generally appear in wide-circulation journals anyway, and there is no shortage of more specialized or regional journals as outlets for the rest. Is our publication system being corrupted by the pressures on academics to publish, and publisher's calculations that university libraries will buy books unquestioningly while forever seeking cuts in journal subscriptions?

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